LSO #5

WE'RE NEARING THE HALFWAY MARK HERE. I THOUGHT IT WAS TIME FOR A QUICK RECAP OF ALL THE IMPORTANT/RECURRING CHARACTERS WHO HAVE APPEARED IN I.S.O. THUS FAR.



NAME: CODY FROST
SPECIES: SIBERIAN TIGER
AGE: 19
ROLE: LEAD/ TORMENT TARGET



NAME: DOUG HILL
SPECIES: COUGAR
AGE: 23
ROLE: CODY'S COWORKER/ LOVE INTEREST



NAME: JAKE PACKARD
SPECIES: GREY WOLF
AGE: 19
ROLE: CODY'S ROOMMATE/ SOURCE OF TORMENT



NAME: JEFF CORNWALLIS
SPECIES: MOUNTAIN GOAT
AGE: 24
ROLE: DORM REPAIRMAN/ CODY'S MENTOR



NAME: TODD CONNORS
SPECIES: BENGAL TIGER
AGE: 18
ROLE: CODY'S BEST BUD/ALL AROUND NICE-GUY



NAME: SAM HILL
SPECIES: COUGAR
AGE: 27
ROLE: BARMAID/DOUG'S SISTER & GUARD CAT



NAME: BORIS HOOKS
SPECIES: ALLIGATOR
AGE: 18
ROLE: BOTTOMLESS PIT/ CODY'S CONFIDANTE



NAME: "THOR" GRAINGER
SPECIES: BISON
AGE: 36
ROLE: DORM GARDENER/ CODYS' NEMESIS



NAME: TYRONE BELTRAN
SPECIES: BAT
AGE: 32
ROLE: CODY'S BOSS/ MASTER BARTENDER



NAME: ZACH HASTINGS
SPECIES: SKUNK
AGE: 18
ROLE: JAKE'S BUDDY/2ND SOURCE OF TORMENT



NAME: BECKY ADAMS
SPECIES: BEAVER
AGE: 25
ROLE: BARMAID/ SOURCE OF SANITY



NAME: TIM LONGORIA
SPECIES: WEASEL/OTTER
AGE: 23
ROLE: DOUG'S ROOMMATE/ BEST FRIEND



NAME: IRENE "DUSTY" DUSTIN
SPECIES: OSTRICH
AGE: 30
ROLE: DOUG'S ROOMMATE/ "BABY SITTER"



NAME: TREVOR BUCKINGHAM
SPECIES: HORSE
AGE: 24
ROLE: DOUG'S FRIEND/QUEEN OF THE BOOKSTORE



NAME: ROBBIE WARREN
SPECIES: RABBIT
AGE: 26
ROLE: PERSONAL TRAINER/ TREVOR'S HUBBY



NAME: NATE OZ
SPECIES: SNOW LEOPARD
AGE: 18
ROLE: CODY'S CLASSMATE/ FLUFFBALL SKATER



NAME: DAVE DUCHAINE
SPECIES: LYNX
AGE: 17
ROLE: TODD'S ROOMMATE/ ANIMATION FANBOY



NAME: RANDALL WINGER
SPECIES: KITE
AGE: 18
ROLE: TODD'S BUD/ HOCKEY FREAK



NAME: PETE FIRESTONE
SPECIES: DALMATIAN
AGE: 17
ROLE: TODD'S BUD/ FRAT BOY

I.S.O.

CHAPTER 9

MY S.O.

...SO THAT'S DAVE, PETE, AND RANDALL.

AND YOU GUYS SHOULD RECOGNIZE DOUG, MY... COWORKER.

HEY.

SUP.

OKAY, LEMME DO THE COIN TOSS, AND WE CAN LET THE SLAUGHTER BEGIN!

WHOA WHOA, WAIT A SECOND, NOW.

CODY, AND DOUG, PLAYING FOR THE SAME TEAM?

SORRY, BUT WE CAN'T HAVE THAT.

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RED ALERT

BEEPBEEPBEEPBEEPBEEPBEEPBEEP

WHAT? HOW COULD HE TELL?! DON'T PANIC, DON'T PANIC!

W-WHY NOT?

COME ON, THAT'S NEVER BEEN KOSHER.

THE TWO TALLEST GUYS GOTTA BE SEPARATED.

OH... YEAH, FAIR ENOUGH.

PETE, YOU CAN SWAP WITH CODY.

SURE THING.

YANNO...

I'M NOT EVEN THAT GOOD. FOOTBALL WAS MY SPORT.

EH, S'ALRIGHT, IT'S NOT LIKE DOUG IS--

YOU CHOSE... *POORLY.*

AH, GO BLOW IT OUT YOUR--

SORRY.
TAILS.
DAMN.
AH WELL. 'FRAID WE'RE SKINS, GUYS.
AH, YOU WIMPS.
VOTED, WE HAVE. GUARD DOUG, YOU MUST.

...AND DAVE'S A FAN OF IT TOO! 'COURSE, HE ALWAYS DOWNLOADS IT, SO I TOLD HIM HE COULD BORROW THE DVDS SOMETIME.

I JUST HOPE RANDALL WASN'T TOO SORE AT YOU FOR BRINGING ME ALONG. HEH, BUT HE DID LIKE YOUR FOOTBALL RABBI JOKE...

WELL, NEXT TIME, I'LL BE SURE TO--

WHOA!

THUD

SHUT UP AND KISS ME.

NOT THAT I'M OBJECTING...

BUT ARE YOU SURE YOU WANNA DO THIS NOW?

WHY NOT?

WAS THAT AN EARTHQUAKE? DOUG, ARE YOU--OH! UH, HELLO.

SEE, DUSTY'S GOT THE NIGHT SHIFT TODAY, SO SHE'S STILL--

DON'T MIND ME, I WAS ABOUT TO...

ER,

UM, GO TO THE, UH, STORE--

YES, FOR... THINGS, THAT I NEED TO BUY, WHICH COME FROM A STORE,

SO YOU TWO BOYS JUST, UH--

ER... I...THAT'S OKAY.

I WAS...ON MY WAY OUT. I GOTTA SHOWER BEFORE CLASS. WITH LOTS OF CONDITIONER...

SEEY'ALL LATER...

HEE HEE, D'OH, I'M SORRY I'M SORRY I'M SORRY--

HEH, DON'T WORRY, DUSTY, HE CAUGHT ME OFF-GUARD TOO.

NOT THAT I MIND, BUT I WONDER WHAT BROUGHT THAT ON...

WHAT THE HELL BROUGHT THAT ON? ONE LITTLE GAME OF SHIRTS 'N' SKINS, AND I GO ALL RAEP TIGAH??

SIX YEARS OF BEING A PERFECT GENTLEMAN THROUGH LOCKER ROOMS, GYMS, TODD SHIRTLESS...BAM! RIGHT OUT THE DOOR.

OKAY, OKAY, SO A BOYFRIEND IS A DIFFERENT PROPOSITION ENTIRELY.

"BOYFRIEND." TUH. I DUNNO IF HE'D EVEN CALL ME THAT YET. WHAT DO I DO, ASK?

THE SAME WAY I ASKED BEFORE SLAMMING HIM INTO THE WALL?

I FEEL LIKE SUCH A SLUT.

*AND THE WORST PART? DAMN...THAT WAS ACTUALLY **REALLY** HOT...*

STILL, THAT WAS ACTUALLY ***REALLY*** HOT.

YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT TOO DISAPPOINTED? I CAN TRY SLIPPING OUT THE WINDOW NEXT TIME...

HA!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT...I'M JUST GLAD HE FINALLY TOOK THE INITIATIVE, REALLY. WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT TIME.

WELL, I SURE WON'T BE PULLING A STUNT LIKE THAT AGAIN ANYTIME SOON! NEXT TIME I'LL JUST BE COOL. NO OVERPLAYING MY HAND.

AH, BRAIN OVERLOAD AGAIN. I'VE GOTTA STOP DOING THAT TO MYSELF ALL THE TIME.

MUCH BETTER. UM. I THINK...

VIBRATE

Inbox

d00d do u still wanna join us 2day after class?
:3

Options Back

AWRIGHT EVERYONE, DIG IN!

GREAT, I'M STARVED!

HEH, LOST ANOTHER BATTLE WITH THE MYSTERY MEAT IN THE CAFETERIA?

HUH? NO, I PURPOSELY DON'T EAT BEFORE THIS CLASS.

I MEAN, CAN YOU IMAGINE BEING STRUCK BY FOOD COMA DURING HIS LECTURE?

HELL, THAT COULD BE FATAL!

EXACTLY!

OKAY, WHO SAW "FAST LANE 3" OVER THE WEEKEND?

AAAAND THE VERDICT?

OH, I DID!

EH, MINDLESS ACTION. BUT, I KNEW THERE'D BE A SHIRTLESS SCENE FOR SEAN MATTHEW GIBSON, SO I STUCK AROUND. HE HAD, WHAT, THREE IN HIS LAST MOVIE?

YOU SURE IT WAS ONLY TWO?

TWO.

TRUST ME. TWO *EXTENDED* ONES.

ONE'S ENOUGH TO CONVINCE DEBBIE TO SEE IT WITH ME...

CAREFUL, THAT MIGHT BE LEVERAGE TO FORCE YA TO "ONE OF HEARTS." MY BOY *STILL* HASN'T FORGIVEN ME FOR THAT ONE.

THANKS FOR THE WARNING, I'LL BRING BARF BAGS.

EH, COUPLES.

AW!

CODY, ARE YOU ENJOYING THE SINGLE LIFE TOO?

ME?

NO GIRLFRIEND HERE.

AWESOME, YOU OUGHTA JOIN US AT ROGUE'S SOMETIME. PLENTY OF HOTTIES TO SPARE!

I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND.

...BUT THEY DIDN'T PUT THE RADIO REMIX ON IMYOOSIK!

THOSE BUMS! AND THE ALBUM VERSION HAS NO RAP, RIGHT?

YEAH. BASTABES.

HEY, I KNOW A GREAT PLACE FOR DOWNLOADS LIKE THAT, OWEN... YA

REALLY? COOL, THANKS!

MUNCH MUNCH

SIP

COME ON, SHE'S OT *REALLY* DEAD.

NNA IDN'T YOU S THE EPISODE TWO WEEKS AGO? SHE CAN ONLY REGENERATE NCE EVERY OUR

OH YEAH? BET YOU TEN BUCKS!

THE BOUNCER WOULDN'T LET ME IN CAN YOU BELIEVE THA I HAD MY SHORTEST T ON!

CRUNCH-CHOMP

HEY CODY... EVERYTHING OKAY THERE, MAN?

WHU?

NO NO NO, YOU GOTTA TRY IT ON THE ROCKS!

UDE, Y OTTA TELL GUYS' NIGHT OUT? AS TO UNDERSTAND T. I MEAN, YOU W HOW IT GOES, IGHT, SARENA?

MP HER IF SHE K THIS UP. HELL, I THINK IF SHE'S NOT ASKING FOR HER OWN TIME WITH THE GIRLS TOO, SHE'S EITHER GOT NO LIFE OR IS H SOMETHING

I DUNNO, YER JUST KINDA QUIET...

OH, SORRY, I WAS...PRETTY HUNGRY MYSELF.

BY THE WAY....

SO DID ANYONE FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS UP WITH THE LECTURE LAST WEEK? I KNOW HE SKIPS AROUND, BUT THAT WAS RANDOM. I'M FREAKING OUT IF IT'LL BE ON THE TEST...

OH, THAT?

I SERIOUSLY DOUBT IT. SEE, TEN MINUTES IN, I WAS FALLING ASLEEP, AND I NOTICED...

HE'D BROUGHT THE LECTURE NOTES FOR THE WRONG CLASS?! HA! MAN, WHY CAN'T HE BE RETIRING A YEAR EARLIER?

CODY, YOU DA MAN!

NAPPING, MR. FROST?

NO, SIR, JUST LOOKING FOR THE PEN I DROPPED.

WAIT A SEC...

--SO ALL THE BLOCKS LINE UP?

YA GOT IT!

I SWEAR, THIS GAME WAS THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT ME FROM GOIN8 POSTAL THE FIRST TWO LECTURES.

SOMETHIN' TELLS ME HITTIN' THE GAME SATURDAY MIGHT BE MORE YOUR SPEED THAN ROGUE'S?

THAT'D BE MORE LIKE IT, YEAH.

GASP! THERE'S A BOBA PLACE NEXT DOOR TOO?

YEAH! SO YOU GO RIGHT ON HATTERAS STREET, THEN TURN LEFT AT WILSON AVENUE, THEN...

WOW, YOU CAN LEG-PRESS THAT MUCH?!

YEAH, BUT I THINK I'M FALLING BEHIND ON MY ARM WORKOUTS...ANY SUGGESTIONS?

hey thx for the invite! was fun! oh and...thx for not tellin them about... yanno... ^^;;

de nada! but d00d i had no reason 2 bring it up...tho u can see they

wouldnt mind neway? btw if ur willin 2 host @ least 1ce ur welcome n c time! :3

OKAY, OKAY, SO MAYBE I AM OVERTHINKING THE ISSUE TOO MUCH...

LATER THAT WEEK...

Y'KNOW...

I THINK I'M REALLY STARTING TO GET THE HANG OF THIS!

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE THE PUN.

YOU'RE A NATURAL, TODD!

AND HOW'RE YOU DOIN' THERE, CODY?

FEH. I STILL SAY MY HANDS AND FEET'RE TOO BIG FOR THESE THINGS.

AW, DOUG NEVER HAD ANY PROBLEMS.

SPEAKING OF DOUG, TOO BAD HE COULDN'T MAKE IT.

WELL, HE'S UH...JUST...OH, FERGETIT.

ALMOST... THERE...

WHY, WHASSUP?

I'VE BEEN... OVER-THINKING WHICH DIRECTION OUR RELATIONSHIP SHOULD GO.

HEH, I FIGURED YOU'D BE BIDING YOUR TIME 'TIL YOU COULD BACK HIM AGAINST THE WALL AND GO SPELUNKING FOR HIS TONSILS.

SINCE HE'S NOT HERE, CAN I TALK TO YOU 'BOUT HIM 'N' ME?

SURE THING!

AND, UH, ACTUALLY...

YEAH, THE MOVERS SEEM TO BE GIVING HIM A TON OF EXTRA SHIFTS LATELY.

UHHHH, THE THING IS, I JUST DID THAT.

OH. I SEE...

ER, AHEH... TODD, YOU MAY NOT WANNA--

LA LA LA! YOU DO THE HOKEY POKEY AND YOU TUNE YOUR BEST FRIEND OUT...

LATER THAT WEEK...

YOU GONNA TRY THIS ONE, CODY?

DUNNO. I'M NOT SURE IF I'M CUT OUT FOR WALL-CLIMBING.

I THINK MY HANDS 'N' FEET ARE TOO BIG FOR THESE THINGS.

AW, DOUG DIDN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS.

YEAH WELL, HE... UH...

EH, FORGET IT.

SPEAKING OF DOUG, TOO BAD HE COULDN'T MAKE IT THIS TIME.

ALMOST THERE...

YEAH, SEEMS LIKE HE'S HAD A TON OF EXTRA SHIFTS AT THE MOVER'S LATELY...

BUT ACTUALLY, SINCE HE'S NOT HERE...CAN I TALK TO YOU A SEC 'BOUT...

HIM AND ME?

WHASSUP?

SIGH...HOW TO PUT IT? I'VE BEEN OVERTHINKING WHAT DIRECTION OUR RELATIONSHIP SHOULD GO. SURPRISE SURPRISE, HUH?

AW, I DUNNO.

SURE THING!

HEH, HERE I WAS THINKING YOU'D BE BIDING YOUR TIME UNTIL YOU COULD BACK HIM INTO THE WALL AND GO SPELUNKING FOR HIS TONSILS.

UHHH, THE THING IS, I JUST DID THAT, AND NOW I'M MORE CONFUSED THAN EVER.

OH!

...

I SEE.

HEH, OH YEAH, TODD, YOU MAY NOT WANNA--

LA LA LA!

YOU DO THE HOKEY POKEY AND YOU TUNE YOUR BEST FRIEND OUT...

AND I FINALLY REALIZED, IT WASN'T THE FACT THAT I LOST CONTROL THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME THE MOST.

THEN WHAT'S UP?

WELL...ONCE THE MOMENT WAS GONE, SUDDENLY I DIDN'T WANT TO GO ANY FURTHER. I MEAN, IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE HIM, I JUST FROZE UP MENTALLY. PANICKED. GETTING OUT OF THERE WAS ALMOST A RELIEF.

AND WHEN-- ER, IF WE'RE EVER READY FOR THAT NEXT STEP...WHAT IF I STILL CAN'T FOLLOW THROUGH? HELL, I CAN BARELY EVEN PICTURE MYSELF IN THAT SITUATION.

AW, EVERYONE GETS NERVOUS THEIR FIRST...UH...FIRST TIME?

ER... AHEH. YEAH.

THAT'S NATURAL! PLUS YOU WERE PROBABLY BEING PRACTICAL...THERE'S PLENTY OF REASONS TO WANT TO BE, UH, CAREFUL...

I GUESS. THOUGH I KINDA DOUBT DOUG SLEEPS AROUND.

YOU NEVER KNOW.

BUT IT'S GOTTA BE MORE THAN THAT. I TRUST HIM. AND I'M WORRIED THAT I'M LEADING HIM ON IF KEEP GRINDING TO A HALT ONCE THINGS START TO...UH, HEAT UP.

HEY, NOW DON'T YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT THAT! IT'S YOUR DECISION TOO. HE SHOULD LEARN TO RESPECT THAT, IF HE DOESN'T ALREADY.

I DUNNO... MAYBE I'M JUST NOT REALLY GAY AFTER ALL?

JEFF?

CODY. DOUG NAKED.

...BENCH-PRESSING YOU.

GYARGH!

GOOD THING I'M FACING THIS WAY.

LA! LA-LA-LAAAAA! LA!!

AND I FINALLY FIGURED OUT, IT WASN'T THE FACT THAT I LOST CONTROL THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME THE MOST.

THEN WHAT'S UP?

WELL... ONCE THE MOMENT WAS GONE, SUDDENLY I DIDN'T *WANT* TO GO ANY FURTHER. I MEAN, IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE HIM.

I JUST FROZE UP MENTALLY. PANICKED. GETTING OUT OF THERE WAS ALMOST A RELIEF.

SO...LATER, WHEN--ER, IF WE'RE READY FOR THAT NEXT STEP...WHAT IF I STILL CAN'T FOLLOW THROUGH?

HELL, I CAN BARELY EVEN PICTURE MYSELF IN THAT SITUATION.

AW, EVERYONE GETS NERVOUS THEIR FIRST...UH... FIRST TIME?

"COUGH" ER, YEAH.

THAT'S NATURAL. PLUS YOU WERE PROBABLY BEING PRACTICAL.

THERE'S PLENTY OF REASONS TO WANT TO BE, UM, CAREFUL.

I GUESS. THOUGH I KINDA DOUBT DOUG SLEEPS AROUND.

YOU NEVER KNOW.

BUT IT'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING BESIDES THAT. I TRUST HIM, HONESTLY.

AND I'M WORRIED THAT I'M LEADING HIM OFF IF I KEEP GRINDING TO A HALT ANYTIME THINGS START TO...UH, HEAT UP.

HEY, NOW DON'T YOU FEEL GUILTY ABOUT THAT!

IT'S YOUR DECISION TOO...HE'S GOT TO RESPECT THAT, IF HE DOESN'T ALREADY.

OKAY, YOU CAN LET ME DOWN NOW!

SURE, TODD!

I DUNNO... MAYBE I'M JUST NOT REALLY GAY AFTER ALL?

WAAAAAAUGH!

CRIPES, SORRY, LOST MY CONCENTRATION FOR A SEC THERE.

N-NO PROB.

OH, AND CODY? DOUG, NAKED. BENCH-PRESSING YOU.

GWUH! ACTUALLY, MAYBE I WILL TRY THIS WALL.

MAINLY SO I CAN FACE IT FOR A FEW MINUTES.

LA LA LA!! THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

CLIMB-IT CONTROL

"RINGTONE"

Y'ELLO.

JEFF DEAR!

GAH. WHAT NOW?

NOT GONNA GO SHOOT HOOPS WITH THEM? WELL, I GUESS IT NEVER WAS YOUR SPORT...

WHAT? HOW DO YOU--?

DON'T THINK THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NEVER ALONE WITH CODY ANYMORE, THAT MEANS I FEEL I HAVE NO REASON TO WATCH.

OH, STOP IT. HE HAS A BOYFRIEND, FOR CHRISSAKES!

SO WHY DO YOU HANG AROUND HIM SO MUCH? HM, MAYBE YOU'RE HOPING TO HOOK UP WITH ONE OF HIS GAY BUDDIES.

SHOULDN'T YOU SPEND MORE TIME WITH FRIENDS YOUR OWN AGE?

OH. THAT'S RIGHT. YOU DON'T HAVE ANY.

AND WE BOTH KNOW WHY.

"CLICK"

AH, THERE YOU ARE. AND I THOUGHT WE WERE LATE.
HEY. SORRY.
'SABOUT TIME WE HAD A REMATCH, DOUG.
HOPE YOU DON'T MIND...
BUT I BROUGHT SOME FRIENDS ALONG THIS TIME.
...AND ROBBIE, AND DUSTY
ZUP?
HEYA.
YEAH, PLEASE BE ON OUR TEAM!
WELL, IF WE'RE MIXING THINGS UP A BIT, MAYBE YOU CAN BE ON MY TEAM.
DUSTY, EH?
SAY WHAT? I THOUGHT YOU DON'T LIKE TALL WOMEN!
FORGET THE HORMONES. THAT JUST MEANS I WON'T HAVE TO BE SKINS.
WHY NOT? I'M ALL FOR EQUALITY.
I'LL JUST WHIP THIS OFF AND—
NO!
UH... THAT IS... I...
EVER HEARD OF A SPORTS BRA?
AHEH, OF COURSE.

I LEARNED MY LESSON. NO PICKING TEAMS 'TIL WE SEE HOW GOOD. EVERYONE IS.

DAMN. THEY'RE ALL REALLY GOOD!

HUH.

DUDE! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU ALL PLAY BASKETBALL.

OH, I DIDN'T TELL YOU?

C'MON, WHAT DID YOU THINK?

WE AUTOMATICALLY HANG OUT JUST CUZ WE'RE ALL GAY?

WELL, NO...

YOU'RE... ALL GAY?

WELL, ALL THE BOYS ARE...

THAT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU, DOES IT?

EH, I JUST--

IF YOU'RE WORRIED WE'LL TRY FLIRTING TO DISTRACT OUR WAY TO AN ADVANTAGE, SUGAR...

LET'S JUST SAY WE DON'T *NEED* TO. I PLAY IT STRAIGHT.

GOTCHA.

NAH, JAKE SHOULD STILL BE IN CLASS. WHY DO YOU ASK, IS HE STIFFING YOU ON TIPS OR SOMETHING?

NOT AT ALL, I WAS THINKING...

OI?

AI JUST WANTED T'GRAB MAI PODTUNEZ, AND...

UM....AM AI INTERRUPTIN' SOMETHING?

WELL, NOT YET, BUT IF YOU'D BEEN A FEW MINUTES LATER, YOU MIGHT HAVE--

--MISSED US, CUZ WE'RE IN A HURRY,

AND THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE,

SINCE OUR DORM IS CLOSER TO WORK THAN HIS APARTMENT,

SO I THOUGHT WE'D SHOWER UP HERE,

AND IT'S BETTER THAN SOME SMELLY OL' LOCKER ROOM.

NOT TO SAY IT DOESN'T STILL HAVE ITS HAZARDS.

YOW! UH. YEAH.

CRAK

BUT WE NEED TO GET A MOVE ON, SO IF YOU'LL EXCUSE US...

OI! HEH, ALRAIGHT, ALRAIGHT, AI GOT WOT AI CAME FOAH...

CRAK

AND YA BETTER BRING MORE TIPS IF YOU SHOW UP TONIGHT!

SURE THING, MAITE!

ANYWAY, I...

HEY, IS SOMETHIN'S WRONG?

YOU'RE NOT... ASHAMED OF ME, ARE YOU?

WHA-- ASHAMED? NO! WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?

I DON'T KNOW. I REALIZE YOU KINDA WANT TO BE DISCREET ABOUT US, BUT... IT'S ***JAKE***. LIKE, THE LAST PERSON ON CAMPUS WHO'D EVER CARE. AM I GOING TO HAVE TO SNEAK AROUND AND BE YOUR "COWORKER" FOREVER?

WELL NO. I MEAN, HE WON'T ALWAYS BE MY ROOMMATE.

C'MON, THOUGH, HE'S CRAZY. AND HARDLY THE SHARPEST GUY AROUND.

WHO KNOWS WHO HE'D BLURT THIS OUT TO. MY PARENTS? THE KARATE CLUB?

AND HE'LL ALWAYS BE A HORNDOG. HE'D PROBABLY TRY TO JUMP MY BONES IF HE KNEW I WAS GAY.

HM, BUT WHY WOULD I EVEN NEED TO EVEN BRING THAT UP?

I'D FEND HIM OFF. I KNOW I CAN.

CUZ HE'S CRAZY.

HONESTLY, EVERYONE WHO'S CLOSE TO ME KNOWS I HAVE A BOYFRIEND. TODD... JEFF... AND--

HEY...DID YOU JUST SAY "BOYFRIEND?"

ER... WELL YEAH, YOU ARE... RIGHT...?

IF ***YOU*** THINK SO... THERE'S ONE WAY TO BE SURE.

THERE'S SOME THINGS ONLY A BOYFRIEND WILL SAY TO YOU.

HOLD THAT THOUGHT.

BUH?

'ELLO AGAIN. FOUND OUT AI FERGOT MAI--

EARPHONES, I KNOW. HERE YA GO.

THANKYA!

NOW THEN, YOU WERE SAYING?

OH, RIGHT.

GET OUT OF YOUR CLOTHES THIS INSTANT.

...AND SHOWER, OR WE'LL BE LATE FOR WORK.

ACK! OKAY, OKAY!

CRAK

iSQ

CHAPTER 10

1.50 MONTHS LATER

AND CODY SAYS HELLO, BUT HE HAD TO RUN.

ANOTHER DAY OUT CONQUERING THE WORLD, HUH?

WELL, FROM THE SOUND OF THINGS, SAM'S OCCUPYING ALL OF HIS SPARE TIME LATELY.

REALLY TAKEN WITH HER, ISN'T HE?

SEEMS LIKE IT. APPARENTLY THEY'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE TOGETHER.

WITH HER FRIENDS, WITH HIS FRIENDS, ALL OVER THE CITY.

THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR! I KNEW IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE FOUND THE RIGHT GIRL TO OPEN UP TO...

BUT I HOPE IT'S NOT AFFECTING HIS STUDIES?

HE CLAIMS NOT, BUT HE CERTAINLY DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TO SAY ABOUT HIS CLASSES.

WE'LL SEE HOW HIS GRADES HOLD UP. SO...UM..I KNOW HE'D NEVER TALK TO ME ABOUT THIS, BUT MAYBE HE WOULD WITH YOU...

IT'S JUST THAT...SHE'S OLDER THAN HE IS.

I HOPE SHE ISN'T..UM... YOU KNOW.

MOVING TOO FAST FOR HIM?

MM, I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, MARTHA.

WHY NOT?

I STARTED TO WARN HIM ABOUT USING PROTECTION, AND I COULD *HEAR* HIM FLUFF UP OVER THE PHONE.

SOMEHOW, I THINK WE'LL BE SAFE FOR AWHILE.

OH, THAT BOY. HIS FUR ALWAYS DID TAKE AFTER YOUR SIDE OF THE FAMILY...

ELSEWHERE...

JINKIES! WHAT'DYA FIND, JAKEY DOO?

CRAIKEY! IT'S A 12-INCH @AME!

YOU KNOW NOTHIN@, MR. PACKARD!

"OPERATION: CODYFIN@AH'S DATE", FOAH INSTANCE?

DUDE, SO YOU LIKE, SERIOUSLY THINK CODY'S GOT A STEADY?

AI'D BET MAI LAIFE ON IT!

BUT...HE NEVER TALKS ABOUT THEM? MAJORLY WEIRD!

YEAH! AI DON'T KNOW WHY 'E WON'T CONFAIDE IN ME. WHY, THESE PAST FEW WEEKS AI'VE BEEN EXTRA NAICE TO 'IM AND 'IS FRIENDS...

JAKE MANAGED TO SLIP A DOLLAR IN YOUR WAISTBAND? UP THERE? MAN, HE'S LIMBER.

ER...WHY, YES, I SUPPOSE YOU PROBABLY *COULD* BOUNCE A QUARTER OFF IT.

MAY AI TRY A DOLLAH COIN?

I JUST WISH HE DIDN'T USE DOLLAR COINS. THEY'RE COLD!

MOTHER, WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO TALK TO MY ROOMMATE?

HIS ACCENT IS SO CUTE!

MAYBE HE'S AFRAID YOU'D TRY TO STEAL HER.

AI'D NEVAH KNOWINGLY DO THAUT... ALTHOUGH...

THAT ACCENT!

THAT BODY!

THAT... DANCING!

GRRRRRR...

GASP! WAIT...WOT IF IT'S CUZ 'E'S ACTUALLY DATING SOMEONE 'E SHOULDN'T BE!

P'RHAPS A PROFESSAH!

HM...

OR THE DAUGHTAH OF A BITTAH FAMILY RAIVAL... LIKE...UM...THAUT STORY... ITALIANS. LOTSA DYIN'...

OH! I KNOW THAT ONE... "THE ALTOS"?

OR EVEN A FAMILY MEMBAH!!!

WHEREFORE ART THOU CODYO?

TIME FOR THE RULER, MR. FROST.

HMM.... NOPE, BRAIN REFUSING TO TRY PICTCHERIN' THAUT, THANKS. BLEH.

CRAIKEY, IT'S BOUND TO END IN DISASTAH! WE HAVTA FAIND OUT 'OO IT IS NOW!

MEBBE IT'S NAUT TOO LAITE TO STOP 'IM!

HEY, WHAT IF IT'S A DUDE, AND HE'S JUST IN THE CLOSET?

ZACH, MAI FRIEND...LEAVE TH' THINKIN' TO ME, ALRAIGHT?

YEAH, GOOD IDEA...

ELSEWHERE STILL...

WELL, IF YOU'D *BEEN* TO CLASS, YOU'D REMEMBER THE DUE DATE. JENNIE GOT ME HER PART OF THE REPORT A WEEK AGO!

I KNOW, I'M SORRY, BUT DOUG ONLY GETS CERTAIN DAYS OFF. JUST PLEASE DON'T TELL THE OTHERS. SARENA MAKES A GREAT GYM PARTNER ON TUESDAYS.

GROAN. YOU REALIZE THIS'LL TAKE US ALL NIGHT, RIGHT? I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DITCH MATH TOMORROW.

AW, YOU HATE THAT CLASS ANYWAY.

AND, I'LL MAKE IT UP TO YOU. I SWEAR, JUST NAME IT. ANYTHING.

ANYTHING?

ANYTHING!

RRRGH, FINE.

I HOPE YOU'VE AT LEAST BEEN GETTING SOME GREAT SEX OUT OF IT.

UM... YEAH.

OH, COME ON!

YOU MEAN YOU TWO HAVEN'T EVEN-- NOT *ONCE*?!

CAN WE JUST GET TO WORK ALREADY?

10:35PM

11:41PM

1:37AM

2:12AM

2:49AM

Goggle

4:08 AM

WHEW, DONE. MAN, IT'S LATE.

OKAY.

YEAH. LET'S TAKE A BREAK BEFORE CLEANING UP.

4:09AM

ZZZZZZ...

OI... CODY?

HUH? WHA?

WHEW! THERE YA ARE! AI WAS WORRIED 'BOUT YA WHEN YA DIDN'T COME IN LAUST NAIGHT.

AI MEAN, AS A BOUNCAH 'N' ALL, AI THOUGHT MEBBE YA GOT BEAT UP ON THE JOB, OR SOMESUCH.

EH? OH. NO, 'M FINE. I'S HERE ALL NIGHT WITH--

UH...I... WITH...

IT'S NOT WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!

WELL, IT--

HOW DID I GET THERE? MAYBE CUZ HE'S WARM?

NOT THAT KIND OF WARM! I...

I...

...

ZZZ---

SNORT...YAWNNN... DAMN, CODY. WHO THE HELL IS JESSIE?

JESSIE?

...RAIGHT. ANYWAY, LONG AS YER OKAY, CODESTER, AI GUESS AI'D BETTAH BE OFF FOR MAI WORKOUT.

OR T' FAIND A STUDENT DIRECTORY!

YEAH. YOU WERE CALLING OUT HER NAME AND PAWIN' AT ME 'N' STUFF.

YOU SOUNDED SO HAPPY, I HATED TO WAKE YOU, AND--

OH! UH, *THAT* JESSIE. ER, NATE, I REALLY DON'T THINK YOU--

LATAH!

YUP, YUP, AHHHH, THAT WAS SOME MIGHTY QUICK THINKING, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF. HEH... "JESSIE."

AW MAN, WHY'D YOU DO THAT, NATE? I DON'T NEED ANY MORE LIES TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT...

UM, DID I MISS SOMETHING? SINCE WHEN ARE YOU OUT TO JAKE?

ER... I'M NOT.

AND I WAS ONLY TRYING TO HELP! YOU NEVER OBJECT TO ME KEEPING YOU CLOSETED FROM OUR STUDY GROUP FRIENDS. SO SUE ME FOR HELPING NOW! IT'S NOT MY JOB TO KEEP TRACK OF ALL YOUR GAMES!

TRUE. BUT...

AVOIDING THE TOPIC ISN'T THE SAME AS AN OUTRIGHT LIE. PLUS, DID YOU SEE THAT? HE WAS... *CONCERNED* ABOUT ME. I GOTTA ADMIT...

HE'S REALLY KINDA SWEET IN HIS OWN DEMENTED WAY. MAYBE IF I GAVE HIM MORE OF A CHANCE, HE AND I COULD BE...

...BUT ANYWAY, ALL THAT ASIDE, YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU ONLY DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS IN MY BEST INTERESTS.

AND IT WAS PRETTY DAMN CLEVER TO BOOT. SO, THANKS FOR STEPPING IN FOR ME.

YER WELCOME. I'LL JUST ADD IT TO YOUR TAB, AFTER LAST NIGHT.

SPEAKING OF WHICH...

YOU DID SAY YOU'D DO *ANYTHING*.

SO...WITH THOSE BIG, STRONG ARMS...HOW ARE YOU AT...POLISHING?

WAHAHAHA! I SWEAR, ONE OF THESE DAYS, YOU'RE GONNA OUTFLUFF ME!

HAR, HAR. SO WHAT *DID* YOU WANT, THEN?

AFTER CLASS...

SOMEHOW, I KNEW I WAS STILL GONNA LOSE MY SHIRT.

C'MON, I'M NOT STUPID.

JUST KEEP AT IT. WINTER BREAK'LL BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

ELSEWHERE STI--EH, YOU GET THE PICTURE.

ENTRANCE

HI!

UH... HELLO...

...ARE YOU... *GULP*, INTERESTED IN SIGNING UP FOR A PERSONAL TRAINER?

NO, THANKS, I'M ONLY LOOKING FOR ROBBIE WARREN. D'YOU KNOW WHERE HE'S AT?

OH, THANK GOODNESS! ER, I, THAT IS, I DIDN'T THINK WE'D HAVE ANYONE BIG ENOUGH FOR YOU. *KOFF!* ROB'S IN THE OFFICE OVER THERE.

ROBBIE?

HEY DOUG, 'SUP?

EH, SAME OL'...

MM, NAMUCH. YOU?

COOL SO... UM...

YES, I GOT IT HERE...

THANKS, I REALLY APPRECIATE IT, I--

HUH?

OH, I SAID YOU COULD HAVE A LOAN...BUT I NEVER SAID THERE'D BE NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

I WAS AFRAID OF THAT...

FIRST OFF, WHAT'S THIS ABOUT NOT TELLING DUSTY OR TIM?

OH. WELL, DUSTY'S ALREADY CUTTING ME TOO MUCH OF A BREAK ON THE RENT AS IT IS...

...AND SAM GRILLS TIM ON HOW THINGS ARE WITH ME AND CODY, AND HE'S GOT SUCH A BAD POKER FACE.

I DON'T WANT HER TO KNOW ABOUT THIS.

HAS SHE HAD ANY OTHER REASON TO BE CONCERNED?

NOPE!

YOU SURE? 'SALL GOOD?

YEAH.

REALLY.

WELL..'CEPT, YANNO...

...HIS USUAL ISSUES WITH...

...INTIMACY.

STILL?! LAST TIME DIDN'T YOU TRY--

NOPE.

OKAY, LET'S PLAY DEVIL'S ADVOCATE HERE. HONESTLY, HOW MANY COLLEGE GUYS HAVE YOU MET THAT TAKE THINGS THIS SLOW?

WELL, NONE, BUT--

EXACTLY! WHAT IF HE HAS AN STD OR SOME WEIRD FETISH... MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO BUILD YOU UP 'TIL YOU'RE DESPERATE, OR WHERE YOU THINK YOU "OWE" HIM. IS HE STILL PAYING FOR EVERYTHING?

ONLY AS MUCH AS I LET HIM. I AM ASKING FOR A LOAN HERE.

YEAH, BUT STILL! YOU'RE GOING ALONG WITH IT LONGER THAN YOU REASONABLY SHOULD. AND NO OFFENSE, DOUG, BUT I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE EAGER FOR SOME KIND OF, UM, PAYOFF HERE. YOU *WANT* IT.

SIGH. IS IT THAT OBVIOUS?

SORRY. AND I BET HE CAN TELL. YOU'D THINK HE'D BE MORE CONCERNED THAT HE'S STRINGING YOU ALONG.

ALL THOSE DATES... ENDED EARLY--

WAIT, I KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH THIS.

THIS IS ABOUT STEVE, ISN'T IT?

CARLA
ROGER
ERIC
MATT
CHAD
DAVID
ANGELA
INC

YOU'RE NEVER GONNA LET ME LIVE THAT ONE DOWN, HUH?

I LEARNED MY LESSON AFTER HIM, I WOULDN'T--

IT WASN'T JUST STEVE... DON'T FORGET JAY.

HUH? JAY'S PROBLEM WASN'T MONEY, IT WAS--

I KNOW IT WASN'T, THAT'S NOT MY POINT. THERE WAS DERRICK AND, UH, "MUTT", AND...

LOOK, I LIKE CODY, HONESTLY, I DO. BUT YOU GOTTA START HAVING MORE SAY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.

I'M WORKING ON IT. TREVOR AND I HAVE BEEN OVER THIS BEFORE, I CAN'T--

15

I KNOW YOU WANT TO BE RESPECTFUL OF HIS NEEDS, BUT IF HE'S NOT ATTENDING TO YOURS TOO, THIS MAY JUST NOT BE A GOOD FIT.

'M SURE CODY WOULD LISTEN IF I SAID ANYTHING. I JUST...I DON'T THINK HE KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS YET HIMSELF. HE'S SO NEW TO THIS.

I DON'T LIKE WAITING, BUT I DON'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING UNTIL HE'S SORTED IT ALL OUT.

30

YOU SURE HE'S WORTH THE WAIT?

I DO. IF I GIVE HIM SPACE, HE'LL GROW INTO IT.

45

AND HEH, FOR ONCE, I THINK I'M DATING A GUY CAPABLE OF GROWING UP.

IN THE END, THIS'LL BE GOOD FOR BOTH OF US.

BUT I...

60

THANKS, ROBBIE. PAYDAY'S ON FRIDAY, I'LL GET THIS BACK TO YOU THEN.

TAKE YOUR TIME, BUD. TAKE YOUR TIME...

I HOPE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO USE THAT ALL-NIGHTER AS YOUR EXCUSE WHEN WE KICK YOUR ASS.

LOSE? YOU WISH! BESIDES, I GOT LIKE TWO HOURS OF SLEEP...

OOOH, WHAT YOU GOT THERE? WOW, PEOPLE STILL BUY CD'S?

I DIDN'T BUY IT, I'M BORROWING IT FROM DOUG.

DIANE SALINAS?! HA! BORROWING IT FOR WHAT, FRISBEE PRACTICE?

NO, I, ER, *BURNED A COPY OF IT.*

THE HELL? YOU? I ASSUME YOU MEAN IN A BONFIRE.

NAH, HE PLAYED IT A COUPLE TIMES AND... AHEH. SOME OF IT'S KINDA PRETTY I GUESS, AND...WELL, IT'S A BIT HARD TO GET "IN THE MOOD" LISTENING TO METAL ALL THE TIME, YOU KNOW?

THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER ALTERNATIVE.

LIKE WHO? BRITNEY LOPEZ?

I... IT...AW, IT WAS ONLY THAT ONE CD.

UH-HUH.

OH, YOU'D DO THE SAME IF... I DUNNO, BRAD JOLIE MADE A CD.

AND I KNOW YOU'D GIVE ME JUST AS MUCH HELL ABOUT IT.

'COURSE, AT LEAST BRAD WASN'T JAILBAIT AT THE TIME.

IT'S ALLOWED, I WAS JAILBAIT AT THAT TIME TOO!

STATUTORY IS STATUTORY. TELL IT TO THE JUDGE!

GET BACK HERE!

UH-HUH.

BESIDES, I ONLY BOUGHT IT CUZ IT WAS THE ENHANCED VERSION. I WANTED THE VIDEOS!

UH-HUH.

DUDE, BABY GOT TAIL! DID YOU SEE HER "I'M NATURALLY BLONDE (YOU CAN CHECK)" VIDEO? I SWEAR THAT OUTFIT WAS PAINTED ON!

WHOA!

OOF!

C'MON NOW, YOU GUYS, JUST CHILL OUT...

FOR GAWD'S SAKE, WE'RE ALL ADULTS HERE.

ALL RIGHT, I PISSED YOU OFF IN THE HANGOUT, CODY DIDN'T WATCH HIS STEP, YOU THREW YOUR WEIGHT AROUND...I THINK WE'RE ALL EVEN. THIS GRUDGE MATCH HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH.

CAN'T WE JUST SHAKE AND MAKE UP?

OOOKAY, I GUESS NOT.

FORGET IT, TODD. LET'S GO.

HEY, WATCH IT!

WHAT? WHAT??

REMEMBER? KEEP OFF THE GRASS.

AH.

THANK YOU.

...YEAH, BUT WE'RE NEVER GONNA MAKE IT TO THE ROSE BOWL AT THIS RATE.

DUDE, IF KINGSTON CAN JUST GET OVER THAT KNEE INJURY IN TIME, WE'RE GOLDEN!

IF. I WONDER HOW DRUNK HE HAD TO HAVE BEEN TO TRY THAT JUMP...

HEY, WHO'S THE NEW GUY?

OH, RIGHT, GARRETT.

HE'S IN MY ENGLISH CLASS. GREAT GUY. LOCAL, TOO, HE SHOWED ME A GREAT PIZZA PLACE DOWNTOWN...

PETE WASN'T ABLE TO MAKE IT AGAIN? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME, I COULD'VE TRIED ASKING BORIS.

OH, UH, HE HAD TO BAIL AT THE LAST MINUTE. CRAMMING FOR HIS GEOLOGY MIDTERM.

FUNNY, YOU SAID HE HAD A GEOLOGY MIDTERM LAST TIME. DO THEY HAVE ONE A WEEK?

ER, YOU'RE RIGHT. I MUST BE THINKING OF STATISTICS.

COME ON TODD, I AIN'T BUYING IT.

PETE DOESN'T WANT TO PLAY WITH A BUNCH OF GAYS, RIGHT?

SIGH. HE DIDN'T WANT THEM TO KNOW. BUT HE'S REALLY NOT A BAD GUY.

HE JUST...WASN'T COMFORTABLE.

HE APOLOGIZED PROFUSELY, IF IT HELPS.

UM...YOU WON'T TELL THE OTHERS, WILL YOU?

. . . NO, THERE'S NO POINT.

ER... YA GONNA BE OKAY, MAN?

YEAH, I'M ALRIGHT. ANYWAY, I GOTTA GO GIVE THAT CD BACK TO... MY BOYFRIEND.

THANKS FOR LETTING ME BORROW DIAN--ER, THIS CD.

ANYTIME! PLENTY MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.

SO, UM... ABOUT TOMORROW NIGHT... I WAS THINKING MAYBE... I'D BE A GOOD IDEA...IF WE COULD--

YEAH, UH, TOMORROW. YANNO, I'VE KINDA BEEN THINKING...

PERHAPS WE SORTA NEED TO CUT BACK ON SEEING EACH OTHER SO MUCH.

OH! CUZ I WAS ABOUT TO SAY--

NO, NO, I KNOW WHAT THIS SOUNDS LIKE. I'M HAVING A GREAT TIME, REALLY, I JUST GOTTA START HITTING THE BOOKS A BIT HARDER.

BUT YOU DON'T--

SHOOT, THIS IS COMING OUT ALL WRONG. LISTEN...

I LOVE YOU.

GUESS YER LUCKY YA WEREN'T HERE TO SEE THAT, EH, PETE?

GOODNESS! I... LOVE YOU TOO.

WELL, WHADDAYA KNOW. SO IS...LIKE, EVERYONE HERE GAY? IS GAY THE NEW EMO OR SOMETHING?

HEY, I'VE HEARD IT'S A GREAT WAY TO PICK UP CHICKS.

TELL *THEM* THAT.

'SUP, THIS IS 555-1975.

I'M TOO BUSY COMING UP WITH CLEVER VOICEMAIL MESSAGES TO ANSWER THE PHONE NOW.

BEEEEEEEP

HELLO, CODY DEAR. I HOPE EVERYTHING'S GOING WELL WITH YOU.

LISTEN, YOUR FATHER AND I HAD AN IDEA.

YOU REMEMBER NORA'S DAUGHTER'S WEDDING IS IN TWO WEEKS, RIGHT?

WELL, SINCE WE'RE DRIVING UP FOR THAT ANYWAY, WE THOUGHT WE'D EXTEND OUR TRIP A BIT AND DROP BY FOR A DAY OR TWO TO SEE YOU.

I KNOW THANKSGIVING'S NOT FAR OFF AND WE DON'T WANT TO INTERRUPT YOUR STUDIES--YOU ARE STILL ON TOP OF YOUR CLASSES, RIGHT?

...BUT WE REALLY WOULD LIKE TO MEET THIS SAM WE'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT! SHE SOUNDS WONDERFUL AND I DON'T KNOW WHEN ELSE WE'D GET TO SEE HER.

SO PLEASE CALL US BACK WHEN YOU CAN.

LOVE YOU!

BYE!

TO BE CONTINUED JULY 2008